DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 139 228 EC 100 803

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TITLE Mainstreaming from Plan to Program: From the Perspective of the Mainstream Coordinator. Rationale for Mainstreaming.
PUB DATE Apr 77
NOTE 16p.; Paper presented at the Annual International Convention, The Council for Exceptional Children (55th, Atlanta, Georgia, April 11-15, 1977); See EC 100 804 and EC 100 805 for related information

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Educable Mentally Handicapped; Elementary Education; Mentally Handicapped; *Program Descriptions; *Regular Class Placement; Success Factors

ABSTRACT

Described is the mainstreaming program at the College Learning Laboratory (at the State University College at Buffalo, New York) to further the temporal, social, and instructional integration of elementary grade mentally handicapped children with normal peers. Discussed are these three components of mainstreaming, requirements for successful mainstreaming (such as a diagnostic prescriptive approach to individualized programing), instructional management, and the importance of providing support services to the handicapped child without his leaving the regular class. Criteria are given for selecting handicapped students for the mainstream program and include ability to work on tasks independently, ability to get along with classmates, and academic achievement adequate for inclusion in some regular instructional groups. Also noted are other program components such as the provision of transitional services to foster acceptance by nonhandicapped peers. (DB)

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P82
Session 390

Paper Presented to
55 th Annual Convention of
Council for Exceptional Children
Atlanta, Georgia
April 12-15, 1977

Session #390

MAINSTREAMING FROM PLAN TO PROGRAM:
FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF A MAINSTREAM COORDINATOR, A SPEECH PATHOLOGIST, A SPECIAL CLASS TEACHER, AND A REGULAR CLASSROOM TEACHER.

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FROM THE MAINSTREAM COORDINATOR:

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RATIONALE FOR MAINSTREAMING

During the first year of our Mainstreaming Program at the College Learning Laboratory (which is a demonstration school at the State University College at Buffalo New York), one of our teachers shared a note she had received from a sixth grade student eliciting her help in finding a special school for a mentally handicapped student in her class. The note went on to express her grievances that the retarded student was given too much of the teachers' attention and that she received good grades for work that the others would have received poorer grades for. Overall, the writer felt this retarded student should be placed somewhere else--a more suitable place.

Her letter, while clearly understandable from a young person, summarizes in one short page the major historical response of our schools and our society to the needs of handicapped individuals. Many of us, regardless of age and level of education, think of mentally handicapped persons as grossly different, they trouble us in deep, unexplainable, irrational ways, and we would like them somewhere else not cruelly treated, of course, but out of sight, out of mind as has existed for many years, in many schools.

One of the areas where many of us concerned with education have been erroneous, has been in our conceptualization of the normal child as sharply dichotomized from the handicapped child. The conceptual schema we have been using is that approximately 10% of the school age population can be defined as handicapped and who, because of their handicapping conditions, require special education assistance. Conversely, the remaining 90% of the children have been regarded as a relatively homogeneous group of normal learners. We have assumed the children in these two groups to be very different in nature, to be quite distinctive in the learning challenges they represent. As a result, regular educators have only reluctantly accepted the responsibility for teaching handicapped children. To facilitate acceptance of the

handicapped by regular educators, I would like to see the concept of "normal" expanded to include others at the lower end of the spectrum. Thus, the recognition that a majority of the mentally handicapped are normal (the mildly retarded), not defective, will make us realize that a significantly large group of the retarded will always be with us and that we need to provide more humanistic educational efforts for them. On this basis alone, the human concern for human beings, we must attempt to have those handicapped children who can profit both socially and academically from a regular class setting for all or part of the time, in sight and in mind.

The concept of mainstreaming, simply stated, requires that "exceptional" children be educated in the same environment as all other children whenever possible. Support for the notion of mainstreaming has grown out of earlier concerns over the doubtful efficacy of the traditional approach of separating "exceptional" children from their peers for special educational services (Blatt, 1960; Johnson, 1962; Dunn, 1968; Filler, Robinson, Smith, Vincent-Smith, Bricker & Bricker, 1974). However, we must develop our approach to mainstreaming with a full recognition of the barriers we must overcome. First is the issue of attitudes, fears, anxieties and possibly overt rejection which may face handicapped children, not just from their regular class peers but from the adults in the school and parents of regular children. Much education and orientation is needed in this area to achieve a successful mainstream program.

The second concern is one of providing training and experiences for regular classroom teachers. In mainstreaming we are attempting to normalize the handicapped student to an extent whereby (s)he can participate in the mainstream of society. Some have justly accused special educators of massive dumping of mentally handicapped youngsters into regular classes where they

are left to sink or swim on their own. However this is not mainstreaming. Mainstreaming should be viewed as an alternative means of educating some mentally handicapped students.

There is a mystical quality to our approach to mainstreaming. It has faddish properties and my concern is that we do not deceive ourselves because we as special educators so earnestly want to rectify the ills of segregation. Therefore we must truly seek out the least restrictive alternative environment for the handicapped child which will meet his or her needs and help him to reach his or her fullest potential. It is not easy to develop a mainstreaming program with a delivery of support services without problems but one cannot sweep the problems under the rug. Based upon our mainstream program at the College Learning Laboratory which is a laboratory demonstration school for typical and handicapped students on the campus of the State University of New York College at Buffalo, the following definition is appropriate.

"Mainstreaming refers to the temporal, social and instructional integration of eligible mentally handicapped students with normal peers based on an ongoing individually determined planning and implementing process (Kaufman, Martin, Gottliev, Jay, et. al. 1975)." This definition of mainstreaming does not merely relate to structure but to the time the handicapped student spends with non-handicapped peers in the regular class and when analyzed has the following salient components:

1. temporal integration - it has been demonstrated in our program that the more time the handicapped child spends in the regular class the more he is socially integrated.
2. social integration - deals with the physical social interaction behaviors with the handicapped child's non-handicapped peers. Social integration is also closely aligned with the

acceptance and acknowledgment of the handicapped student by his regular class peers as part of the class.

3. instructional integration - refers to the what and how the mainstreamed student is taught and to what extent the mainstreamed child's educational needs are compatible to the curriculum content of the grade level where student is assigned. Are there materials available in the regular classroom to meet his or her needs? Other important questions which must be considered related to instructional integration are:

   a) to what extent are the instructional practices of the regular classroom teacher compatible to the mainstreamed child's educational needs and what is her willingness or ability to adapt her teaching style to the needs of the mainstreamed child?

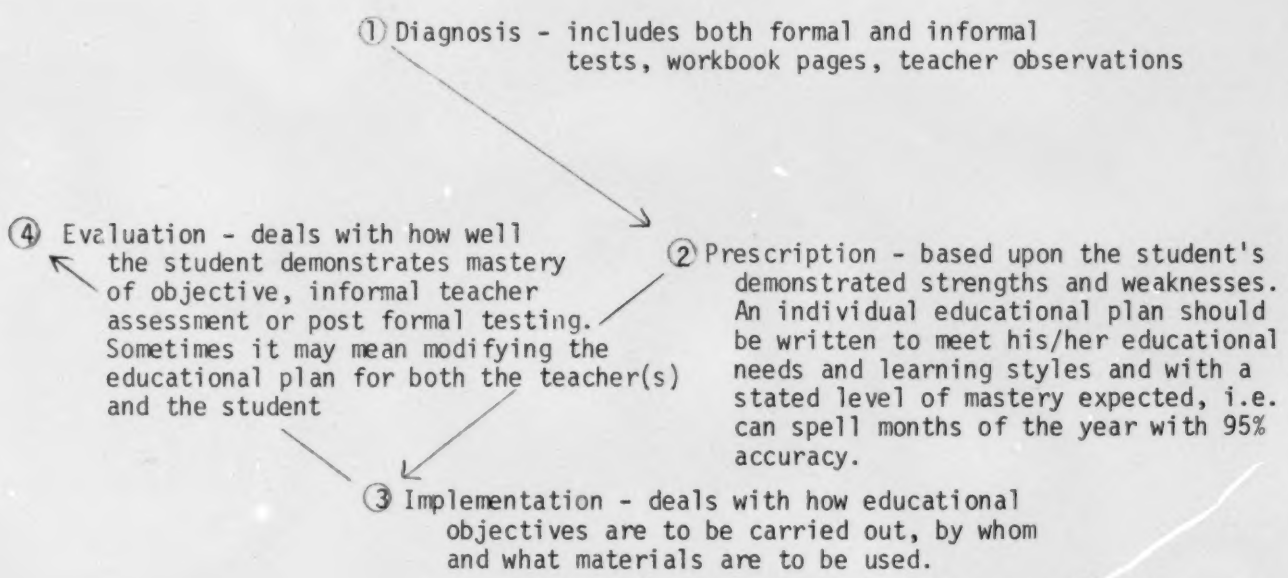
   b) what is the level of compatibility between the special education delivery service system provided and its ability to innovate and be reinforcing to the regular classroom program i.e., the mentally retarded student needs occupational and career tangents in his curriculum. Can these be provided and by whom?

   c) what regular and special educational resources are available to meet the needs of the mainstreamed student?

   d) who does the assessment of educational strengths and needs of the mainstreamed child (ongoing) and where does the responsibility lie for the mainstreamed child's educational plan being implemented and evaluated?

Mainstreaming then requires:

1. A positive expectation that some handicapped children can be integrated into a regular class setting;
2. A building staff who, individually and collectively, respect the individuality of each child and transmit this attitude to the students in their regular classes (absolutely essential for acceptance of mainstreamed students by regular peers). The regular classroom students readily pick up on a non-accepting attitude on the part of the regular classroom teacher and in turn a pecking order rejection can develop;
3. A building staff who are open to change and who are willing to offer a variety of programming and curricula alternatives;
4. An individualized program for curriculum content of grade level predicated upon a diagnostic prescriptive approach. This is based on the Diagnostic Prescriptive model which includes the following:


① Diagnosis - includes both formal and informal tests, workbook pages, teacher observations
② Prescription - based upon the student's demonstrated strengths and weaknesses. An individual educational plan should be written to meet his/her educational needs and learning styles and with a stated level of mastery expected, i.e. can spell months of the year with 95% accuracy.
③ Implementation - deals with how educational objectives are to be carried out, by whom and what materials are to be used.
④ Evaluation - deals with how well the student demonstrates mastery of objective, informal teacher assessment or post formal testing. Sometimes it may mean modifying the educational plan for both the teacher(s) and the student

5. A building administrator who conveys to his staff that he or she supports and encourages mainstreaming.
6. A special education teacher to act as coordinator of the mainstream program who is highly valued by the building staff and who contributes to the process by providing a solid understanding of the needs and capabilities of the handicapped children who are mainstreamed. (S)he further should be able to assist the staff in identifying and, where necessary, demonstrates the use of instructional materials and methodologies which are most appropriate to meet the individual needs of the mainstreamed children.
7. Since the success of mainstreaming is greatly influenced by attitudinal variables, a mainstreaming requires building positive attitudes toward the handicapped among all members of the student body and building staff.

Alexander Solzhenitsyn, in the last letter he circulated among his friends in the Soviet Union, called on them to renounce the lies in that society and its governance. He spoke not only of the lies that the intellectuals and writers were called upon to write or speak under coercion, but also of the lies which others spoke and about which they had chosen to be silent. He predicted that if a small brave band of dissidents would refuse to lie, their size would grow quickly and they would quickly affect changes in their system.

We as educators can learn much from Solzhenitsyn's words. We cannot keep silent about the ills in our present educational system--the failure to respect the individuality and worth of each child; to be open to educational alternatives; to provide appropriate support services for handicapped children and finally to move eligible handicapped children out of isolated

special education programs and into regular settings.

We must also avoid the inclination to ignore the weaknesses and sometimes abuses inherent in mainstreaming programs because we are afraid that exposure will impede the adoption and acceptance of mainstreaming as an educational alternative. We should not allow our belief in the promises of mainstreaming to cause us to be silent if we see faults in its implementation. With the recent confirmation of the rights of handicapped children to the education we offer, there must be an equal responsibility to see that those rights are truly fulfilled and that an appropriate education is provided.

In mainstreaming at the College Learning Laboratory, the regular classroom teachers have for the most part adopted their instructional methods, procedures and scope sequence of subject matter content so that mainstreamed students are included in the regular classroom programs (which at the College Learning Laboratory are called clusters.) There are three teachers and 75 students of which 5-7 are handicapped. The clusters consist of four classrooms, i.e.

closed room	open space with learning centers	closed room
group instruction takes place here		group instruction takes place here

However it is important to point out that not all teachers are ready for this sophisticated concept of mainstreaming and what it entails. Therefore, we who serve as coordinators of mainstreaming programs, when and if possible, need to carefully match handicapped students to regular education teachers while simultaneously attempting to develop more positive attitudes in the staff.

In mainstreaming the handicapped students may be home-based in a self-contained classroom for educable mentally retarded students or a self-contained classroom for learning students. However, it is my position (based upon trial and error and observation over a three-year period) that in order to enhance the handicapped student's self-esteem and to foster a feeling of being a member of the regular class (especially those students spending all or 50% of their time in the regular class), (s)he should be assigned to the appropriate regular class through the school year with those supportive services provided for the student by the person(s) who coordinate the mainstream program when possible in the regular classroom or in a resource setting. It has been my observation that when a mainstreamed student who is full-time mainstreamed is pulled too often from the regular classroom (s)he becomes disoriented to what is happening in the regular classroom and unless there is careful monitoring of both the full-time and part-time mainstreamed student's educational plan and schedule, their program will become fragmented. Therefore it is imperative that constant communication take place among the coordinator of mainstream program, the regular classroom teacher and in the case of the part-time mainstream student, the self-contained special education teacher. To further avoid confusion on the part of the mainstream student, it is recommended that the mainstreamed student only leave the regular class for:

1. resource appointments, speech or language therapy (these should be arranged around the mainstreamed student's reading and math groups in the regular classroom. I feel that the student should not be pulled from these areas as well as gym and art.
2. educational assessments, and

3. conferences with the mainstream coordinator or resource teacher (I schedule students in grades 3-9 once weekly during one of their study or free periods to give the mainstream student a chance to voice any of his or her concerns).

The regular class teachers are enccuraged by the mainstream coordinator to focus on the strengths of the mainstreamed students and are responsible for the instruction and evaluation of the mainstreamed students with consultation with the Mainstream Coordinator (Resource Teacher). It is important to mention that as Mainstream Coordinator I do not have a class of students as such. My responsibilities include: 1) observation of the mainstreamed students in the regular classroom, 2) do assessments, 3) secure ancillary services for the mainstreamed students, 4) set up parent conferences, 5) set up resource appointments, write educational plans for mainstreamed students, 6) schedule time for instructional planning meetings with regular classroom teachers, 7) construct student profiles for mainstream students, 8) collect ongoing data and anecdotal records on each student mainstreamed, 9) to provide inservice for teachers and staff as needed, 10) and finally to provide orientation and periodic group meetings for parents of mainstreamed students.

The mainstream population at the College Learning Laboratory is not one of a random sampling but, however, is one which is highly selective. The rationale for this is that I want to insure a measure of success both on part of the mainstreamed student as well as the receiving regular classroom teacher. Thus before a student is mainstreamed, (s)he is discussed by a committee consisting of the mainstream coordinator, school psychologist, special classroom teacher, the language/speech specialist and on occasion the reading specialist. In order to be mainstreamed the student should meet

the following criteria:

1. demonstrates ability to work on task independently once (s)he is to do and to complete task(s) assigned.
2. demonstrates consistent growth in the academic areas (although not necessarily comparable to that of typically learning students.)
3. demonstrates sustained attention span (depending on age level to be mainstreamed with i.e. if grade I, the student should be able to sit through a 15 minute lesson with minimal assistance.)
4. demonstrates ability to get along with his classmates and exhibit responsible behavior.
5. demonstrates specific academic entering competencies in some areas for each grade level. (This criteria I feel is very crucial in that a handicapped student should be able to be included in at least one of the instructional groupings within the regular class. Unless (s)he possesses a minimal level of acddemic skills, (s)he may be precluded from an instructional, thus, receiving his/her instruction on a one-to-one basis. Such a situation negates the handicapped student's social interaction with his non-handicapped peers and prohibits him from making a contribution to the class.)

The mainstreamed students at the College Learning Laboratory are given both formal and informal tests to ascertain their strengths and present grade level functioning and their preferred learning modalities. Prior to each potential mainstreamed student's entry into the program some of the following tests are administered to him or her:

1. Peabody Individual Achievement Test
2. Gates McGinnite Reading Tests (Readiness-Grade 4)
3. Woodcock Reading Test
4. Key Math Test
5. Piers Harris Self-Concept Rating Scale
6. A Self-Concept Rating Scale (devised by a graduate student consisting of 10 items worded at language level of primary children)

Once the testing is completed, an educational plan for the mainstreamed student is written based upon the diagnostic prescriptive model mentioned earlier.

Other important factors in the College Learning Laboratory mainstream program are:

1. Coordinator of program: this involves ongoing communication of the mainstream coordinator and teaching staff to make sure that there is no duplication or conflict with schedules for resource speech or curriculum extension (art-gym-music-home economics.) Also the coordinator is responsible for securing any other ancillary services needed by the mainstreamed student to facilitate his success within the regular class assigned.
2. Transitional services: this deals with how the mainstreamed was oriented to the regular class. Sensitivity sessions have been helpful with mainstreamed students in grades 3-8 during which time the student is exposed to a variety of situations which he or she may experience in the cluster. A regular class peer who acts as a boddy to the mainstreamed student has been productive also. Another approach has been

through the resource room whereby I will set up a Distar Reading or Language group for one poential mainstream student and include three or four typical students from the grade level where the mainstreamed student will eventually be placed thus setting up a sphere of friends for him or her.

3. Parent role: it is my philosophy that the mainstreamed student has a greater chance of being successful in the regular class once the parents understand and support the program. It is difficult for some parents of mainstreamed students to comprehend that we are asking for their support and approval to place their son or daughter back into an educational environment where he or she has previously experienced failure. The parents are assured that the key difference this time is that the mainstreamed student is not left to sink or swim on his/her own but will have supportive help. Also the parents of mainstreamed students are encouraged to assume a more active role at school and parent meetings are held regularly to air common problems and to provide suggestions for helping the mainstreamed student at home, which is crucial to ensure that the parental help being given does not become frustrating for both the student and the parent and is within the ability level of the student. It is also important to remember that some parents require gentle reminders that the mainstreamed student is functioning in the regular classroom full or part-time at present but his/her

placement may need to be altered as time goes on to meet his or her needs, i.e., if the student is 12 or older I feel that he or she should have exposure to pre-vocational skills and on-the-job training experience rather than pursuing the more abstract segments of the academic curriculum.

Lastly, I feel that it is important for we as special educators to articulate that the benefits of mainstreaming are not just for handicapped children, but for all children. While it is true that a handicapped child in a regular classroom will need varying degrees of special services at all times, it should not be forgotten that any child may need special services at some time. These services often can be made available to him through a mainstream program without labeling, classification or exclusion. Mainstreaming then should be viewed as more than a way of programming handicapped children, but also as a program that strives for individualization of instruction for all children.

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